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LAST TWO IN WELLS FARGO BANK FRAUD SCHEME PLEAD GUILTY
Five Check Scammers Steal \$200,000

SACRAMENTO, Calif.—United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that the last two defendants, JASMIN NICOLE BUTTS, 23, of San Francisco, Calif., and TIFFANY CHARANADA PIPPINS, 21, of Hayward, Calif., pleaded guilty this morning to bank fraud and attempted bank fraud before United States District Judge Morrison C. England, Jr. Three other defendants pleaded guilty recently in the same scheme: JASMINE CHANEL CARMICHAEL, 23, of Sacramento, Calif., pleaded guilty on April 3, 2008; EBONY CROMWELL, 22, of Vallejo, Calif., pleaded guilty on June 12, 2008; and DARCELL EPPS, 21, of San Francisco, pleaded guilty on July 3, 2008.

This case is the product of an investigation by the Placer County Sheriff's Department and the United States Secret Service.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Kyle Reardon, who prosecuted the case, between May 29, 2007 and August 8, 2007, the defendants were part of a coordinated scheme to steal account information from Wells Fargo customers. Using that information, they called Wells Fargo Customer Service and changed the contact information on those accounts to a phone number that they controlled. They would then prepare checks with the stolen account information in amounts ranging from \$2,000 to \$7,500. BUTTS would drive CARMICHAEL, PIPPINS, CROMWELL, or EPPS to various Wells Fargo branches in Roseville and Rocklin, as

well as the Bay Area and Reno, Nevada, and give them forged checks to be cashed. BUTTS and CROMWELL also traveled to Las Vegas, Nevada to cash forged checks. When presented with the checks, Wells Fargo called the account holder to confirm its validity. Due to the fact that the contact information had been changed, a co-conspirator would receive the call and authorize payment. The proceeds of the fraudulently cashed check would be shared among all parties. In total, the conspiracy netted \$199,163. Unsuccessful attempts were made by the co-conspirators to cash an additional \$17,962 worth of fraudulent checks.

The defendants are scheduled to be sentenced by Judge England at different times in the next several weeks. The maximum statutory penalty for each violation of 30 years in prison, a \$250,000 fine, a five-year term of supervised release, and restitution. The actual sentence, however, will be determined at the discretion of the court after consideration of the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of variables and any applicable statutory sentencing factors.

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